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Media Release

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Consumers Warned of Risks When Buying Gift Cards this Holiday Season

Wilmington, DE – During this holiday shopping season the Delaware Department of Justice is alerting consumers to be cautious when purchasing merchant gift cards.

"During this uncertain economic climate, when retailers are filing for bankruptcy and closing their doors, people could be left holding gift cards or gift certificates that they can't use," stated Timothy Mullaney, Director of the Delaware Department of Justice Fraud and Consumer Protection Division. "It's important that consumers make informed decisions about the risks of purchasing gift cards this holiday season."

Consumers are advised to be careful when purchasing gift cards from merchants that may file for bankruptcy. When purchasing a gift card, the Department* recommends that you:

- Buy only from sources you know and trust
- Read the fine print before you buy
- Ask about expiration dates and fees associated with a card
- Before you buy a gift card ensure that none of the protective stickers have been removed and that the back of the card has not been scratched off to reveal its PIN number
- Give the recipient the original receipt to verify the card's purchase in case it becomes lost or stolen
- Consider the financial condition of the merchant and whether it has filed for bankruptcy

Consumers who have questions or concerns about gift cards are encouraged to contact the Delaware Department of Justice toll-free consumer hotline at 1-800-220-5424 or visit www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov.

* Information from the Federal Trade Commission was used to develop this press release. For more consumer tips from the Federal Trade Commission visit <http://www.ftc.gov/>.

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